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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 SEOUL 001644

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; October 19, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, Hankyoreh Shinmun, Segye Ilbo, All TVs
"We Should Not Compromise on Policy for Nation's Future;" President
Lee Mentions Controversial Sejong City Project
for First Time

JoongAng Ilbo
Senior U.S. Pentagon Official: "N. Korean Leader Kim Jong-il Has
Invited President Lee to Visit Pyongyang"

Dong-a Ilbo
Suji, Gokseong High Schools Show Largest Gains in College Entrance
Test Scores from 2005 to 2009

Hankook Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun
Seoul Denies Summit Proposal from N. Korea

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

A senior U.S. Pentagon official said yesterday that North Korean
leader Kim Jong-il has invited President Lee Myung-bak to visit
Pyongyang. The Blue House, however, denied the claim, saying: "We
recently informed the USG about the Oct. 10 ROK-China summit. There
seems to have been a misunderstanding in Washington about what we
told them." (All)

The senior U.S. official also said that a decision on the transfer
of wartime operational control from the U.S. to the ROK will be made
based on how things look in 2012. This remark may suggest a possible
adjustment to the timing of the OPCON transfer. (JoongAng, Dong-a,
Hankyoreh, Segye, Seoul, MBC)

A senior ROKG official said yesterday that Seoul will not provide
massive rice aid to North Korea in exchange for holding separated
family reunions. The North asked for humanitarian aid during last
Friday's Red Cross talks on cross-border family reunions. (JoongAng,
Dong-a, Seoul, KBS)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The State Department has decided to grant a visa to Ri Gun, Director General of American Affairs at North Korea's Foreign Ministry, raising the prospect of a one-on-one contact between the two countries later this month. (All)

According to Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun, the U.S. has suggested to North Korea holding bilateral talks in a third country such as China in mid-November. (JoongAng, Segye)

According to Japan's Asahi Shimbun, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao has put off economic aid to North Korea due to the North's lackadaisical attitude toward returning to the Six-Party Talks. (Dong-a, Hankook)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

All ROK media today gave attention to the State Department's decision to grant a visa to Ri Gun, Director General of American Affairs at North Korea's Foreign Ministry. Most media viewed this U.S. move as raising the prospect of a one-on-one contact between the two countries later this month. Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo wrote in the headline: "Ri Gun Goes to New York... U.S.- N. Korea Dialogue Ripening."

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A senior U.S. Pentagon official's Oct. 18 claim - that North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has invited President Lee Myung-bak to visit Pyongyang - and the Blue House's denial received wide press coverage. A key Blue House official was quoted: "We recently informed the USG about the Oct. 10 ROK-China summit. There seems to have been a misunderstanding in Washington about what we told them. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao did not specifically say that Kim extended an invitation to President Lee."

Newspapers carried the following headlines: "Blue House Wary of U.S. Over-interpretation, Saying: 'No Inter-Korean Summit Is Being Pursued'" (conservative Chosun Ilbo); "Did N. Korean Leader Invite President Lee to Pyongyang?... U.S. Claim Creates a Stir with Seoul" (conservative Dong-a Ilbo); "Unilateral U.S. Briefing Goes against Diplomatic Protocol" (moderate Hankook Ilbo); and "Blue House Displeased with U.S. Mistake" (conservative Segye Ilbo)

Conservative Chosun Ilbo editorialized: "Should an inter-Korean summit take place at this point, it would inevitably be reduced to a venue for economic aid to North Korea, instead of dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue. There is no reason for the ROK and the U.S. to rush around, faced with the North's insincere proposal for an inter-Korean summit. Instead, it is appropriate for the ROKG to disclose the North's proposal in a direct manner and to make clear its principles and positions in order not to cause any unnecessary misunderstandings."

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

DID N. KOREA PROPOSE A SUMMIT?
(Chosun Ilbo, October 19, 2009, page 35)

A high-ranking U.S. Defense Department official told reporters last Wednesday that North Korea is unexpectedly taking a conciliatory stance, with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il inviting ROK President Lee Myung-bak to visit. The comments came during a briefing explaining the itinerary of Defense Secretary Robert Gates during his visit to Seoul on Thursday for the annual Security Consultative Meeting (SCM).

A Cheong Wa Dae official said that no such summit is being planned, although there were discussions in principle about the possibility of a summit if inter-Korean relations improve. These discussions

took place earlier this month during the summit between Lee and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and also when North Korean Worker's Party Secretary Kim Ki-nam met with Lee in Cheong Wa Dae on Aug. 23. So it is true at least that the North Korean leader sounded out the possibility of a summit with Lee on two occasions.

The Cheong Wa Dae official said the U.S. government appears to have misunderstood what Seoul said in a briefing to U.S. officials. When ROK media reported on the discussion of a summit during Lee's meeting with the North Korean envoy in August, the presidential secretary for national security issued a statement saying there was "absolutely no discussion of a summit."

The leaders of East and West Germany met frequently to discuss various matters, but during their two summits in 2000 and 2007, the leaders of North and South Korea avoided any discussion of the nuclear issue, which is the most important item on the agenda involving the two countries. The desire to leave a historic achievement was uppermost in the ROK presidents' minds, causing any topics that could upset North Korea to be swept off the agenda altogether.

In the present situation, there is no way to hold an inter-Korean summit without addressing the North's nuclear arms program. It is the greatest obstacle blocking increased inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation. But the North has always insisted that nuclear dismantlement would be possible only after it receives security guarantees and economic aid, and it still insists that the nuclear

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issue is something to be discussed with the U.S. rather than the ROK. Should an inter-Korean summit take place at this point, it would inevitably be reduced to a venue for economic aid to North Korea, instead of dealing with the North Korean nuclear issue. There is no reason for the ROK and the U.S. to rush around, faced with the North's insincere proposal for an inter-Korean summit. Instead, it is appropriate for the ROKG to disclose the North's proposal in a direct manner and to make clear its principles and positions in order not to cause any unnecessary misunderstandings.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

FEATURES

CONTROVERSY ERUPTS OVER U.S. PENTAGON OFFICIAL'S STATEMENT THAT N. KOREA PROPOSED AN INTER-KOREAN SUMMIT
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, October 19, 2009, page 3)

By Reporters Kang Tae-ho and Hwang Joon-beom, Washington
correspondent Kwon Tae-ho

While S. Korea rushes to deny the content of the remark, some analysts say subtle changes in discourse on N. Korea issues indicate preparation for epochal changes on the Korean peninsula are taking place

A U.S. Pentagon official's statement Thursday (local time) that North Korea has invited President Lee Myung-bak for an inter-Korean summit has resulted in controversy, and has the Cheong Wa Dae (the presidential office in the ROK or Blue House) issuing statements of denial and expressing skepticism over the interpretation of exchanges with North Korea.

In a meeting with reporters, the U.S. official said North Korea was continuing to adopt a conciliatory posture. When asked what North Korea would do next, he said that since the beginning of the Lee Myung-bak Administration, North Korea has escalated tensions by shooting missiles etc., but, recently, it has entered a conciliatory phase, expressed its intention to participate in multi-party talks and invited Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and President Lee to North Korea. In response, a key Cheong Wa Dae official met with reporters Sunday and denied the U.S. official's claims and said a reference to North Korea's request for an inter-Korean summit was a

misunderstanding. He also pleaded with reporters, who might mistakenly believe North Korea had proposed a summit, not to be surprised at the news. Another Cheong Wa Dae official said that the ROKG does not consider only discussing massive economic aid to North Korea in the inter-Korean summit, adding that the North Korean nuclear issue and humanitarian issue should also be addressed.

However, some observers say where there is smoke, there is fire, and when seen in light of the situation on the Korean peninsula, it is hard to believe that the U.S. Pentagon official's statement was merely a slip of the tongue. With the exception of unofficial inter-Korean contacts, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has officially sent President Lee messages on two occasions. One was in mid-August when former a North Korea mourning delegation traveled to the ROK to pay condolences to the late President Kim Dae-jung and met with President Lee. While meeting with Lee, the North Korea mourning delegation, including Workers Party of Korea Secretary Kim Ki-nam, reportedly expressed the need for even a dialogue between the leaders of the two Koreas in order to improve inter-Korean ties.

The other occurred on Oct. 10 during the second trilateral leaders' meeting of China, Japan, and the ROK in Beijing, during which Chinese Prime Minister Wen conveyed Kim's statement regarding his intention to improve inter-Korean relations.

Most of all, analysts are saying the focus should be on slight changes in the language used by the Cheong Wa Dae and President Lee.

First, in his meeting with Prime Minister Wen, Lee said if North Korea truly abandons its nuclear program, Seoul is prepared to have

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an open dialogue with North Korea. In a press conference following the Korea-China-Japan summit, Lee also said if the opportunity arises, he intends to explain his proposed "Grand Bargain" to North Korea and earn their cooperation. On Thursday, during a coffee meeting with foreign diplomats in Seoul, Lee said he expects that it is time for North Korea to abandon its nuclear program and proactively consider the bargain.

Analysts are also pointing out that North Korea's response to the Grand Bargain has not been one of complete rejection. On Sept. 30, although North Korea's official Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) called the "Grand Bargain" a harmful and "not good" proposal for resolving the nuclear issue, it avoided criticism of President Lee and it merely said it was absurd to demand that North Korea abandon its nuclear program without the U.S. first withdrawing its hostile anti-North Korea policies.

When all of the exchanges are placed together, subtle changes can be discerned in the tone of relevant parties' remarks regarding Korean Peninsula issues, including the "Grand Bargain." This is leading some to conclude that preparations are underway for the possibility of an inter-Korean summit and epochal changes in North Korea-U.S. relations.

(This is a translation prepared by the newspaper. We have compared the English version on the website with the Korean version and made some changes to make them identical.)

STEPHENS